











Research Nuts and Bolts

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-  Conducting research : What to think about before setting it up
-  When should you use qualitative methods?
-  Methods for qualitative data collection & analysis
-  Ensuring reliability and validity
-  Interviewing: techniques and issues
-  Observations
-  Focus Groups: Group composition and conduct
-  Community Visitor Surveys
 - general survey tips
-  Conversion Studies
 - assessing advertising effectiveness
-  Cost per inquiry and return-on- investment
 - formulas and tips



Conducting Research

- Incorporating research into your strategic plan
- Assessing your needs
- Defining your question
- Deciding upon the appropriate method
- Quantitative vs. qualitative data collection, analysis, and issues of reliability and validity



When Should You Use Qualitative Methods?

- When the question calls for it: Process, meaning, multiple realities
- In combination with quantitative data
- To achieve an holistic understanding of a topic



Methods for Qualitative Data Collection

- Depth Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Observation
- Participant-Observation
- Projective Techniques
- Collection of images, films, textual sources



Methods for Qualitative Data Analysis


- Emergent
- Patterns, themes
- Coding: Grouping into coded categories that describe, classify, connect
- Iterative process
- Negative case analysis



Ensuring Reliability and Validity

- Responsibility for Generalizability and Representativeness
- Transferable because of shared characteristics
- Persistent observation, prolonged engagement, traceable variance, referential adequacy, purposive sampling, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, providing for audit

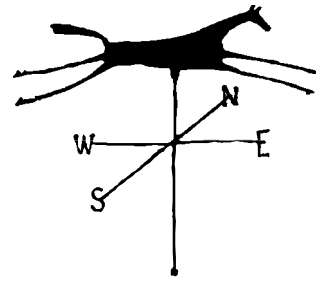
Interviewing

-  Types of interviews: standardized, semistandardized, unstandardized
- Types of questions: essential, extra, throw-away, probing
- Problems: affective wording, double-barreled, complexity, sequencing, evasion tactics



Interviewing Techniques

- Self-assurance and preparation
- Establishing roles and rapport
- Letting the interviewee speak
- Silence is golden
- Avoid leading
- Questions of closure



Interviewing Issues

- Sampling
- Recording
- Confidentiality
- Number of participants in a single interview
- Number of interviews



Observations

- Require time and planning
- Motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, behaviors, customs
- See the world as subjects see it, live in their time frames, capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms
- Tracking, observing and listening



Focus Groups

- One-shot, rapid collection of data
- Dynamic synergy, group brainstorming
- Opportunity to observe interaction
- Intense examination
- Intentional and invasive
- Dominant and passive participants

Group Composition and Conduct

8-12 Individuals, 1 Moderator

Diverse; not generalizable in same way

Sampling issues

Establishment of cohesion and rapport

Non-threatening, honest, comfortable

Leader's Role

Guide from general to specific



Time sensitive questions appropriately

Keep group on track and involved

Deal with outliers

Read body language

Remain flexible

Focus Group Analysis

Diversity of Opinions



Driven by Research Question

Underlying Patterns and Themes

Looking for Limiting Exceptions

Other Issues and Points

Recruitment



1.5 to 2.5 hours

Special Facilities: 2-way mirror, video cameras, nondescript room,
round or oval table

Food

Use of props



Community Visitor Surveys

General survey tips :

- Determine the purpose of your survey
- what type of survey is best suited? Mail-out, interviews, self-administered, suggestion boxes?
- although tempting, try not to get it all with one survey



Questions to ask

- Each question should have one purpose
- For “closed-end” surveys where you construct the answer choices, answers should be non-overlapping and exhaustive
- Open-ended surveys provide a wealth of information but are more time-consuming to analyze and synthesize
- The first question is the most important. Make it interesting and easy!

Questions not to ask

- Expenditure questions need to be designed with care. If a mail-out survey, recall bias may cause underestimations.
- Do not ask leading questions, survey participants may think you are making a sales pitch and will be less likely to respond objectively.

Sampling issues - beware of your sampling biases!

- A sample of 500-1,000 is usually considered large enough for most studies, 300 or less may be adequate depending on your analysis.
- Bias: it is very difficult to have a completed unbiased sample. E.g. a visitor center survey will not include those folks who already have information (usually regional visits or repeat visitors). How to compensate? Be aware of your biases, try to capture those folks you may have missed through interviews or other means.

Pilot testing: Always hand your survey out to 20-30 people before sending out the full survey.

Rate of return: how many surveys are actually returned? A 20% rate of return is not unusual after a first mailing. Prepare a small postcard one week after the first mailing as a reminder. One week after the due date, a second mailing with a new survey should go out to non-respondents. Usually 50% return is a good target for mail-out surveys.

Interviews can be open-ended and informal, semi-structured or completely structured. Interview data, focus groups, and even informal feed-back from customers can provide equally (and often more) valuable, than a mail-out survey.

Make it fun, make it easy, provide incentives!

- Paid postage, easy to read, easy to compile and analyze.
- You may need to offer some prize to boost your return rates.

Conversion Studies

Purpose:

To assess advertising effectiveness

To determine "conversion rate"

To obtain feedback on your ads, brochures and website.

What percent of information requesters were actually converted into a visit to your county?

Construct a random sample from information requesters

Conversion usually done through mail-out survey

Questions to ask:

- did they visit your county/town?
- where did they see advertising or brochure?
- had they already decided to come before requesting information?

Gross Conversion:

- # of information requesters that actually visited

Net Conversion:

- # of information requesters that came to visit due to ad/brochure
- these people saw your ad
- they may have called your 1-800 number
- they hadn't already decided to visit

Pitfalls with conversion studies:

- recall bias may be high, few people actively remember seeing ads
- obtaining net conversion is easier when you use a different 1-800 number for each ad, otherwise some type of cross-tabulation may be necessary



Proving your worth: cost per inquiry and return-on- investment.

Cost-per-inquiry

should include all production costs

what is and isn't an inquiry?

- a distinction should be made between website "hits" and "visits", a visit is when a browser visits several website pages, whereas a hit is just a visit to the homepage and may not usually be considered an inquiry

How to calculate:

e.g. advertisement placement/prod. + website development =
\$100,000

Inquiries = 50,000 brochures + 10,000 website visits =
60,000 inquiries

$\frac{\$100,000}{60,000} = \1.66 per inquiry

Return-on-Investment

What you need to know:

- average length of stay (4.4 days*)
- party size (3.2 persons*)
- average spending (\$70 per person per day*)
- gross conversion (# people who came, eg. 59%)
- net conversion (# people who came because of advertising, e.g. 30%)
- number of Inquiries (e.g. 60,000)
- advertising costs (e.g. \$100,000)

* state average in 1996

ROI Formula:

Inquiries * Conversion rate * length of stay * party size *
average per day spending = total spending

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{total spending}}{\text{advertising costs}}$$



Example: Net ROI

$60,000 * 30\% * 4.4 \text{ days} * 3.2 \text{ people} * \$70 \text{ per day} = \$17,740,800$

$$\frac{\$17,740,800}{\$100,000} = \$177$$

For every advertising dollar spent, the return to our county was \$177 in traveler spending.

For more information:

Dillman, D.A. (1978) Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method, New York: John Wiley & Sons

- with this reference, you can't go wrong

Ritchie, B.J.R. and C.R. Goeldner (1987) Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Research, A Handbook for Managers and Researchers, New York: John Wiley & Sons

- the encyclopedia of travel and tourism research

Sample Visitor Survey Questionnaire:

Hello! Thank you for visiting our town. Please take the time to tell us how your stay was.

1. Where do you live? City _____ State/Province _____ Country _____
2. Was this the first time you visited Western Town? _____ Yes _____ No
3. What is the primary purpose of your visit?
____ vacation/ recreation _____ visit friends and family
____ business _____ shopping
____ special event (please tell us which one) _____
____ just passing through (please list your destination): _____
____ other purpose: (please explain) _____
4. How long are you staying in Western Town? _____ Hours _____ Days
5. How many people are in your group? _____ persons
6. If staying overnight in Western Town, enter the number of nights you are spending in each of the following:
____ Hotel _____ Bed & Breakfast
____ Motel _____ Private Campground
____ Private Home _____ Public Campground
____ Other (please specify): _____
7. What activities will you participate in? (List all activities that apply)
____ Shopping _____ Golfing
____ Visit museums _____ Skiing
____ Hiking _____ Biking
8. Please indicate the breakdown of your total spending while in Western Town:
Lodging approx. \$ _____ Gas and auto services approx. \$ _____
Restaurants/meals approx. \$ _____ Local transportation/taxis approx. \$ _____
Retail stores approx. \$ _____ Other (please specify) approx. \$ _____

9. What three things did you LIKE about visiting here?

10. What three things did you NOT like about visiting here?

Thank you for your help! By filling out your name and address on the backside, you will qualify to enter a drawing to win a weekend trip to the Western Town Ranch Inn.

Sample Conversion Study Questionnaire:

1. Did you visit Western Town as part of your summer vacation?
☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ We did not take a summer vacation this year

IF YES, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 3

2a. IF you did not visit Western Town, where did you go for your vacation?

2b. What was the main reason for NOT visiting Western Town? _____

3. Where did you hear about Western Town?

- ☐ magazine ads ☐ newspaper/magazine story
☐ friends & family ☐ special event advertisement
☐ previous visit
☐ brochure, (please specify where you got our brochure): _____

4. Where did you see our toll free number 1-800-Wes-tern?

- ☐ magazine ad ☐ phone book
☐ AAA guide ☐ other, please specify: _____

5. Prior to requesting information about Western Town:

- ☐ Had you definitely decided to visit?
☐ Were you just thinking about visiting?

6. Which other destinations were you considering? _____

7. To what extent did the information you received influence your decision to visit Western Town?

- ☐ to a great extent ☐ to a slight extent
☐ to a moderate extent ☐ not at all
☐ doesn't apply

8. Please indicate how useful each information source was in planning you trip by
 If you used, please circle 5 = "most useful", 1 = "least useful", or check "Didn't use".

	<u>Most useful</u>			<u>Least useful</u>		Didn't use
A. Western Town Travel Brochure	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Western Town Website	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Western Town Welcome Center	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Our toll-free number	5	4	3	2	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Other, please specify: _____						

Thank you for your help! By filling out your name and address on the backside, you will qualify to enter a drawing to win a weekend trip to the Western Town Ranch Inn.